

**California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley  
Kern County Public Forum  
Bakersfield, CA – March 9, 2006**

**Government Panel**

Ron Drummond - Executive Director of Kern COG

- Best plan for cooperation is having the current panel continue for up to two more years
- The 8 Valley COGs are organizing to speak with one voice
- The COG's are working on a blueprint for the Valley that covers a number of areas the Partnership is working on
  - They will need assistance with air quality and water issues
- Top three priorities for the Valley:
  - Improve Highway 99
  - Improve the railroad system
    - Fix the bottle neck issues that freight cars experience
    - Create a direct route to the Los Angeles area
    - Develop a high speed rail system
  - Education

Ray Watson – Co-Chair Kern County Board of Supervisors

- A transportation plan should include a high speed rail system
- Funding for indigent care impacts the Valley counties – the Valley needs help from the State and Federal governments
- Need a better education system
- The Partnership needs to continue for the Valley to fix its problems

Alan \_\_\_\_\_ - Kern County CAO's Office

- Top three priorities for the Valley:
  - Clean air – the regulations imposed on the Valley restrict growth
  - Affordable housing – the Valley has limited affordable housing
  - Education – Focus on higher education and vocational education

Larry Rider - Kern County Superintendent

- Students need to be better prepared for college
- There needs to be economic diversity in the Valley
- Top three priorities for the Valley:
  - Funding for school
  - Continue with higher education development
  - Funding for infrastructure development

## **Business Panel**

Mr. Collins

- Lawmakers do not understand the impact of laws and regulations on the Valley
  - For example, SB 975 creates a prevailing wage requirement in any construction project where there is a local government incentive
    - This law added \$7 million to a proposed project
    - This is an example of how lawmakers don't recognize local and regional impact
- Transportation
  - Build roads that lead to jobs
- Workforce
  - Focus on vocational education because the large majority of the workforce in the Valley will not attend college
  - Consider preschool and early reading development programs

Debby \_\_\_\_ - CEO Chamber of Commerce

- Transportation
  - Widen and improve Highway 99
  - Rail systems for freight need to be improved
- Air quality is an issue
  - The Valley is doing what it can and is following regulations
    - Unfortunately, regulations imposed by the EPA are one size fits all
    - The Valley's air problems are regional and regulations should be regional
  - Pollution is caused by a small minority of companies and efforts should be focused on those companies in order to be more cost effective
- Education
  - Quality education produces a quality workforce
  - Efforts should be made to reach out to families because stronger family involvement means a better chance to succeed
  - Preschool helps prepare children for success in schooling
  - The need for vocational education cannot be over emphasized

Keith Bryce

- Small business is an important part of the Valley
- One of the biggest problems the small business faces is an educated work force
  - Need to improve vocational education programs
- Enterprise Zones do not provide enough incentives to business and the Partnership should reconsider how an Enterprise Zone gives incentives
- Top three priorities for the Valley:
  - Air Quality
  - Water
  - Higher Educational and Vocational Education
- The Partnership should be proactive about this plan and not let it sit on the shelf

Lou Gomez - Kern County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

- Agriculture is the backbone of the Valley economy and the Valley is losing agricultural land
- Vocational education is a necessity - it is important to have education programs to retrain those who lose their agricultural jobs
- Affordable housing is a problem
- The Great Valley Center should be the lead in implementing the Partnership's plan

Mike Turnipseed - Executive Director, Kern County Tax Payers Association

- The state needs to stop ERAF and return the \$680 million tax dollars to Kern County
- The State must honor its commitments to local government
  - Local governments are not being reimbursed by the State
  - Local governments don't have the resources to not be reimbursed
  - This directly impacts local funding for libraries and police

David Parker – Executive Vice President Kern County Foundation

- The scope of the work panels is broad enough but there should be priorities
- Highway 99 needs to be expanded and improved
- Top three priorities for the Valley:
  - Highway 99 – separate cars and trucks
  - Target industries – create a region wide industry network
  - A model for collaboration and cooperation among the Valley counties
- Collaboration and cooperation is best continued by keeping the Partnership

Follow up questions:

What suggestions do you have for improving Enterprise Zones?

David Bryce: More incentives for educated work force and interest rate buy downs.

What is wrong with industry coming to the Valley and replacing or adding to agricultural jobs?

Gomez: Nothing is wrong with industry. The problem is retraining the work force for the new jobs.

### **Community Panel**

- Students are not aware of the possible jobs and paths to follow outside of college
- Create a technology education center
  - The center would help provide internship opportunities for technical education and work with intermediate and high school students in showing alternative opportunities to college
- Creating more opportunities for technology will help keep an educated workforce in the Valley

Dana Adams – The Tree Foundation

- The top three priorities for the Valley:
  - Do not follow the old model for doing things in the Valley: change the focus of planning and entrepreneurship opportunities
  - Raise future leaders for the Valley
    - Education, schools and family support will create the foundation for future leaders
  - Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate – the 8 counties need to constantly communicate and discuss issues plaguing their community

Dana - Coalition of Kern County

- Public outreach needs to be more of a focus in the Valley
- The Valley needs to find a voice that can be heard by California
- G.I.S. – Geographic Integration System – A system that integrates the views, voices and issues of the Valley
- An infrastructure plan should include broadband and internet accessibility

Steve Sanders – Community Connection for Child Care

- Early education opportunities should be available for all children
  - This will help them prepare for school and life
- Child care is as important to the Valley as infrastructure
- Government, communities and businesses should collaborate to establish ways to further child care

Follow up questions/comments

- Programs such as Future Farmers of America are essential to the getting young students involved and focused on a career path
- The basic skills for education, such as math, should be taught in connection with the vocational education training in order to help students learn and understand better
- Community colleges are the backbone to California education
- Need to develop a strategy for community crime

Art Vogner – Kern County Sierra Club

- A farmland conservancy program should be implemented
- Develop a better infrastructure for railroad system

Carla Edwards – Fresno County Farm Bureau

- Farmland needs more representation in the Partnership
- Bring in industries that include agriculture or work with agriculture